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## PLEA ON MISSILES IS SENT TO SOVIET

### U.S. Calling for Moratorium on Costly Rocket Defense

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 14—The special message carried to Moscow by the new United States ambassador, Llewellyn E. Thompson, appeals to Soviet leaders for an agreement not to deploy antimissile defense systems on both sides, officials disclosed today.

In his State of the Union Message Tuesday night, President Johnson indicated that Washington had decided to defer deployment of such a system and hoped Moscow would follow suit, thereby preventing another costly spiral in the arms race.

The official sources said that the President's note would be delivered to President Nikolai V. Podgorniy by Mr. Thompson, who arrived in Moscow Wednesday to take up his post.

The Ambassador's approach will be the first diplomatic followup to the State of the Union address, the sources added.

On his arrival in Moscow, Mr. Thompson said only that he bore a special message from Mr. Johnson to the Kremlin leaders.

#### Hopes for Better Relations

The officials said the message also expressed President Johnson's hope for improved relations with the Soviet Union. They said it touched on a number of issues, presumably included Vietnam, East-West economic relations, the recently concluded treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons in space and expansion of cultural exchanges.

On the issue of missile defense systems, the President was reported to have made an urgent plea to the Russians to freeze the deployment of the antimissile defense they have already begun.

"We have the duty to slow down the arms race between us, in both conventional and nuclear weapons and defenses," the President said in his State of the Union address. "Any additional waste of resources with no gain in security to either side."

#### \$2-Billion Spent by U. S.

Since 1952 the United States has spent more than \$2-billion in the development of an antiballistic missile defense system, called the Nike X. Despite considerable pressure from Congressional and military advocates of the system, the Administration has refused to move ahead with production and deployment. It could cost from \$3-billion to \$50-billion.

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara is understood to be opposed to entering a race with the Soviet Union to deploy an extensive network on the ground that some missiles could penetrate even such a costly and massive defense, killing millions.

Mr. McNamara's argument is that the best deterrent is improved offensive capability.

The President has confirmed reports that the Soviet Union has increased pressure on him to match this move.

The entire issue is expected to be vigorously debated in Congress after the President submits his Budget Message.

Mr. Johnson has argued that the United States and the Soviet Union have a "common interest" in seeking greater security through disarmament rather than through increased military expenditures.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff are in favor of putting up a missile defense—even if only limited in size and capability—that would serve as a deterrent against Communist China, which is developing an offensive nuclear capability.